

Lev. 26:39

Those of you who survive shall be heartsick over their iniquity in the land of your enemies; more, they shall be heartsick over the iniquities of their fathers; 40 and they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, in that they trespassed against Me, yea, were hostile to Me. 41 When I, in turn, have been hostile to them and have removed them into the land of their enemies, then at last shall their obdurate heart humble itself, and they shall atone for their iniquity. 42 Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob; I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham; and I will remember the land.

**RASHI: I will remember also My covenant with Isaac.** NJPS is misleading—see OJPS. In fact, it is Isaac, not Abraham, who does not get a mention here of the verb “remember.” But God has no need to “remember” Isaac—“His ashes lie piled before Me on the altar.”

\*[In Jewish tradition, God gives credit to Abraham and to Isaac as if the sacrifice commanded in Genesis 22 had actually been carried out. See Rashi’s comment to Gen. 22:13.]

OJPS: Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

**RASHI: Jacob ... Isaac ... Abraham.** Why are the Patriarchs listed in reverse order here? To let you know that even Jacob, the youngest, is worthy enough to redeem Israel. If for some reason he is not, then his father Isaac is with him. If even they two together are not worthy enough, then Abraham is with them, too, and he is certainly worthy. For Jacob learned from his father and Isaac from his father. But whom did Abraham learn from?

**IBN EZRA: Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob.** Why Jacob is mentioned first, according to Saadia, is that his entire life was spent within the covenant.

\*[Ibn Ezra literally says “all his years.” But (since this is true of Isaac as well) perhaps he means that all of Jacob’s sons were “within the covenant,” which was not true of Isaac or Abraham.]

**ABARBANEL: I remember My covenant with Jacob ... Isaac ... Abraham.** Even My covenants with Isaac (which I could have transferred from Jacob to Esau) and with Abraham (which I could have transferred from Isaac to Ishmael) I will remember.

Baruch Schwartz, “Leviticus,” *Jewish Study Bible*

The inverted order may express the gradual motion of God’s recollection backwards in history.

**BEKHOR SHOR: I remember My covenant with Jacob ... Isaac ... Abraham.** Not only the covenant with Jacob, but also the covenant with Isaac, which came later, and the covenant with Abraham, which came earlier. [revised per the Ha-Keter edition](#): ... but also the covenant with Isaac, which came earlier, and the covenant with Abraham, which came even earlier.

H. L. Ginsberg: It is Seidel’s law. [*Israeli Heritage of Judaism* 107 n. 36, cited by Milgrom, 2335; presumably referring to Exod 2:24, “God remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.”]

e-mail: [torah-talk@earthlink.net](mailto:torah-talk@earthlink.net)

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